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Rear-end History

History sleuths might well deduce that this car is from Dubuque, Iowa. The first clue is the small Dubuque pennant displayed in the back window.

The second clue? Although road dust nearly obscures the license plate, the first two raised numbers appear to be 31. Alphabetically, Dubuque is the 31st of Iowa's 99 counties.

The third clue is that John Vachon took this photo. Vachon was a photographer for the federal Farm Security Administration. In 1940, the year on the license plate, he shot some 500 photographs in Dubuque.

The words on the tire cover, however, offer no clues

as to a specific location, because millions of individuals across the nation were enrolled in the short, focused courses offered by the International Correspondence Schools (ICS), founded in 1891. ICS courses were affordable and practical; most were originally designed for blue-collar workers who sought promotions in their factory jobs or new careers in clerical and white-collar work. The slogan "Another I.C.S. Student" advertised this enormously successful correspondence school that reached Americans in Dubuque, Duluth, Detroit, and hundreds of other towns and cities.

—The Editor